



## USS *Peterson* (DE-152)

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*Edsall* Class destroyer escort

Builder: Consolidated Steel Corporation, Orange, Texas

Commissioned: 29 September 1943

Decommissioned: 1 March 1946 (Coast Guard crew removed)

Disposition:

Displacement 1,590 (f.)

Length: 306' 0"

Beam: 36' 10"

Draft: 12' 3"

Top speed: 21 knots

Complement: 216

Armament: 3 x 3"; 4 x 40mm (2 x 2); 8 x 20mm; 3 x 21" torpedo tubes (removed in October, 1943); 2 depth charge tracks (stern); 1 Hedgehog; 8 depth charge projectors.

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The USS *Peterson* (DE-152) was named for Oscar Verner Peterson, who was born in Prentis, Wisconsin on 27 August 1899. He enlisted in the Navy 8 December 1920. Following his first training, he served continuously at sea, and on 8 April 1941, reported for duty in oiler *Neosho* (AO-23). Operating in the South Pacific with aircraft carriers *Yorktown* (CV-5) and *Lexington* (CV-2), *Neosho* was detached from the main force of combatants on the eve of the Battle of the Coral Sea, with a destroyer as escort. At about 0900 on 7 May 1942, a lone Japanese plane spotted the two detached ships, and three heavy enemy attacks followed during the day. In the last of these attacks, twenty dive bombers concentrated on *Neosho*, and scored seven direct hits and eight near misses within a few minutes. Furious fires broke out, and the struggle to save the ship

began. Chief Water Tender Peterson was in charge of a repair party below, and although he was wounded, and all of his assistants were out of action because of wounds, he ignored the possibility of additional burns to close the bulkhead stop valves. He later died of these burns on board a rescue ship, 13 May 1942. For such extraordinary courage and conspicuous heroism above and beyond the call of duty, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

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### **Coast Guard Commanding Officers:**

LCDR R. F. Rea, USCG  
LCDR Sidney M. Hay, USCGR

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### **Official Coast Guard History:**

The Coast Guard-manned destroyer escort USS *Peterson* (DE-152) was built by the Consolidated Shipbuilding Corporation at Orange, Texas, and was commissioned on September 29, 1943 under the command of LCDR R. F. Rea, USCG. Proceeding to Galveston on October 6th, the *Peterson* went into drydock for the latest additions to equipment to make her ready for wartime duties. On the 13th, in company with the USS *Poole* (DE-151) she departed for Bermuda, via New Orleans, for her shakedown exercises. Leaving Bermuda on November 22nd she proceeded to Charleston and on the 28th left for New York.

The *Peterson* departed for Norfolk on December 2, 1943, with three other escort vessels and 23 merchant ships, and there 10 more escorts and 55 merchant ships joined to form convoy UGS-26 for Casablanca. The trip over was uneventful but on the return voyage the slow convoy was tossed and smashed by howling gales and high seas. Some days the convoy failed to make any headway. Many merchant ships ran out of food during that three week's crossing.

After a ten day availability in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the *Peterson* started out on January 28, 1944, for a month's training session at Casco Bay, Maine. It was here that the *Peterson* joined with the other destroyer escorts that made up Escort Division 22, the ships that were to serve with her until the end of the war. These were the previously mentioned *Poole*, USS *Harveson* (DE-316), USS *Joyce* (DE-317), USS *Kirkpatrick* (DE318), and the USS *Leopold* (DE-319). CAPT W. W. Kenner, USCG, was the first division commander and his flagship was the *Poole*.

On March 1, 1944, Escort Division 22 began its first combat operation as a unit, screening convoy CU-16, a fast oil convoy, to Londonderry, North Ireland. The

convoy was diverted several times by British authorities from its original course. Finally on the evening of March 9th, 1944, the convoy was just south of Iceland, only two days from its destination, when the *Leopold* reported a surface contact behind the convoy, four miles distant. It was ominously dark and bitter cold as a freezing wind kicked up choppy seas. The *Peterson* was on the port side of the convoy, just opposite the *Leopold* on the starboard quarter, when the *Leopold* surprised a submarine on the surface. Flashes of the *Leopold's* gunfire were easily visible from the *Peterson*. The escort commander was faced with a dilemma; he had sent the *Joyce* back to assist the *Leopold*, leaving only four escorts with the now sharply maneuvering convoy. If it was a lone submarine, another escort could be spared; however, if a wolfpack were preparing to attack the convoy, all remaining escorts would be vitally needed on their stations. CAPT Kenner decided in favor of the wolfpack. As it turned out the submarine was alone. As the *Joyce* approached the *Leopold* no contact with her could be made and it became obvious that she had been hit, as she was very low in the water. The *Joyce* came up to the sinking *Leopold* for a sound sweep but made no contact. Then the *Leopold* broke in two and the icy waters were filled with survivors and the *Joyce* began maneuvering to pick them up. Lines had been slung over the sides and some men were clinging to cargo nets on what remained of the *Leopold*. Then the *Joyce* got the sound of an approaching torpedo on her sonar gear. A sudden surge to flank speed and a hard over rudder and many nearly rescued men were lost, some caught in churning screws of the *Joyce*. Again the *Joyce* came back for survivors, and again had to get underway as another torpedo was fired at her. Further sweeps failed to locate the submarine. The water, unendurably cold, was fatal to many Coast Guardsmen. The *Leopold* finally sank. The *Joyce*, struggling against seas and torpedoes, could rescue only 20 men of the crew of 199. No officers were saved.

The remainder of the trip to Londonderry and back to New York was uneventful and on April 15, 1944, the *Peterson*, and the rest of Escort Division 22, with the Navy-manned USS *Gandy* (DE-764) replacing the *Leopold*, stood down Ambrose Channel with convoy CU-21, again bound for Londonderry. LCDR Sidney M. Hay, USCGR, formerly executive officer had relieved LCDR Rea as commanding officer. Early the next evening two merchant ships of the convoy collided in the fog and the *Peterson* was detailed to escort them back to New York. She left them with a PC off the swept channel and started to rejoin the convoy at 0100 on April 16th. At 0800, when but 35 miles astern of the convoy, word was received that the tanker SS *Pan Pennsylvania* had been torpedoed. The *Peterson*, together with the *Gandy* and *Joyce*, was directed to seek out the submarine and destroy it. The three escorts joined, all hands tense and alert, as the area was closely screened, every echo and every pip being methodically worked over and charges dropped. The large tanker, the world's largest at that time, was slowly settling as its crew abandoned ship. While the *Gandy* screened, *Peterson* and *Joyce* went in to pick up survivors from life rafts and from the water, many sick from the fumes of octane gas with which the tanker was loaded, unable to help themselves.

Two of the *Peterson's* crew distinguished themselves, Stuart B. Goodwin, CEM, going over the side to help survivors aboard, ignoring the fact that the other escorts might drop depth charges at any moment, — and David J. Stephenson MoMM 3/c, assisting him. Just as they were putting lines around the last of the tanker's survivors, the *Joyce* which had stood in to determine the extent of the tanker's damage and the possibility of salvage, had a "hot" underwater contact and signaled the *Peterson* to join in the attack. The two men scrambled aboard and the *Peterson* veered off sharply, all engines ahead at flank speed. Soon after this the *Joyce* dropped charges, the tremendous explosion shaking the *Peterson*. Then the submarine came to the surface. CDR Hay immediately gave the order "Stand by to ram" but the *Gandy* was better situated for this tactic and the *Peterson* sheered off. The *Gandy* struck the sub a glancing blow and the *Peterson* closed in, her guns going into action. As the sub passed close abeam, her conning tower was laid open by the withering fire from the escorts, and as a parting gesture two shallow set charges were fired from the *Peterson's* K-guns. The German crew began to abandon ship shortly afterward and the U-boat [the *U-550*] began to settle by the stern and finally slid to the bottom. A great cheer surged through the men of the *Peterson*. With 12 survivors of the sub aboard the *Joyce*, the escorts, one Navy and two Coast Guard rejoined the convoy. The hulk of the *Pan Pennsylvania* being a menace to navigation in the ship lanes off Nantucket, was later sunk by the Navy. LCDR Hay received a letter of commendation and the USSR Order of Fatherland War, Second Class, and Goodwin and Stephenson received letters of commendation.

The *Peterson* returned to New York on May 12, 1944, and after a ten-day availability, was again underway escorting convoy CU-26 to Ireland as part of Escort Division 22. This convoy was taken across and returned to New York without undue incident, though no radar or sound contacts were overlooked. Early in July, CDR R. J. Roberts, USCG, relieved Captain Kenner as division commander and Escort Division 22 was off to Ireland again, this time escorting Convoy CU-31, which was brought back to New York on August 5, 1944, without incident. The quietness of these crossings was deceptive, however. The Battle of the Atlantic was far from won.

The next crossing of the *Peterson* with Escort Division 22, turned out to be an eventful one. Departing New York on August 19, 1944, with convoy CU-36, nothing unusual happened until the escorts, having arrived off Loch Foyle, the entrance to Londonderry, were taking their customary departure of the convoy on August 30th. From here the convoyed ships went on alone for these confined waters were considered by the British to be free of submarines. Vessels bound for various ports on the Irish Sea were joined here by British escorts. As the trans-oceanic escorts were leaving, and four merchant ships were also being detached to be escorted northward to Loch Ewe in Scotland, suddenly the last of the four, the tanker *Jacksonville*, carrying a full load of aviation gasoline, went up in a roaring, fiery hell of flames and exploding fuel. Only two of her crew were ultimately saved from the holocaust. On the horizon was a huge convoy of slow

merchant ships and also the *Queen Mary*, the prize the Germans were seeking. The British Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, got into action. The *Queen Mary* and the distant convoy were diverted. Convoy CU-36 dashed on, maneuvering at top speed; and escorts began to pour out of British ports. Plane coverage arrived. By evening nearly thirty escorts were searching the area for the audacious invader who had dared to penetrate to the very back door of the British Isles. Escort Division 22 was sent into port next morning but for several days the hunt went on, with another cargo ship and a British escort being sunk. The submarine was thought to be one of the first German "schnorkel" subs in operation, fitted with a device that enabled it to remain submerged while recharging its batteries [it was the *U-482*]. One great Allied advantage over the enemies subs had thus been eliminated, the fact that they could only remain submerged for a comparatively short time.

On the return voyage with convoy UC-36, the Escort Division struck the full fury of the 100-knot hurricane that was raging up the East Coast of the United States. Headway between the mountainous battering seas was impossible as the screeching wind enveloped the *Peterson* in a blinding sheet of water. Conversation with the other ships over TBS grew fainter and finally died away altogether. The worst of the storm struck about 2000. The *Peterson's* radar ceased to operate. All that night men of all the ships fought to stay afloat, to remain together for mutual protection, but gradually the great convoy began to scatter. When morning and calm arrived not a ship was to be seen. The next day the *Peterson* limped into New York. One by one other ships began to arrive until all were accounted for. There had been no serious casualties.

On October 6, 1944, Escort Division 22 was made a unit of a larger group consisting of the USS Doran (DD-634) and four Navy-manned destroyer escorts: the USS *Burrows* (DE-105), *Slater* (DE-766), *Oswald* (DE-767), and *Ebert* (DE-768). Five more round trips were made during the next seven-and-a-half months, most of them to English Channel ports. Solent, Plymouth, Chergourgh, Milford Haven, Le Havre, and Southampton, together with Liverpool and Greenoch (Scotland), were the ports visited. On April 15th while the *Peterson* was in Boston, a new division commander, CAPT John L. Steinmetz, USCG, relieved CDR Roberts. VE-Day found the *Peterson* sailing back to the United States with her last Atlantic convoy. Eleven convoys had been escorted over and back in nineteen months with hundreds of ships carrying thousands of troops and vital material of war.

After a long availability at the Bayonne, New Jersey Navy Yard, where inch new armament was added and other improvements made, a new division commander, CDR Louis M. Thayer, USCG, reported and selected the *Poole* as his flagship, and on June 4th, Escort Division 22 left New York, bound for the "shooting War" that was still raging in the Pacific. From June 10 to June 20, 1945, the *Peterson* underwent the most intensive of drills, inspections, underway maneuvers and gunnery, at Culebra Island, just off Puerto Rico. Then through

the Panama Canal on June 23rd and up the Mexican Coast to San Diego. Escort Division 22 was now a unit of the Pacific Fleet. On July 10th the *Peterson* set out for Pearl Harbor, arriving on the 16th. She remained in Pearl Harbor six weeks. VJ-Day came and went and finally on August 31, 1946, the *Peterson* departed, escorting a large group of LSTs bound for Saipan. It was a long haul, and a far cry from the fast convoys of earlier days, for the LSTs were slow and lumbering ships. Saipan was reached on the 16th and three days later the *Peterson* departed on the final leg of her journey, bound for Japan. She was joined by the *Poole* and together they arrived at Wakayama, Japan on September 21, 1945. The first waves of occupation troops had just gone ashore. The vast harbor was overflowing with vessels of all types from huge battleships to LCTs. Other ships of Escort Division 22 were on similar missions in other Far Eastern ports. The *Peterson* was in Japanese waters for a little over a month, patrolling the entrances to the Inland Sea, stopping suspicious craft and, in general, protecting our ships anchored at Wakayama. On October 29, 1945, in company with the USS Kearny (DD-432), the *Peterson* and the *Poole* began the trip back home. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on November 7, 1945, the *Peterson* was delayed for repairs and went on to San Pedro alone, where she again joined the *Poole*. On the way up the East Coast a Navy Mariner plane landed near her out of gas, off New Smyrna Beach and the *Peterson* towed her in.

After Christmas leaves at Charleston, South Carolina, the *Peterson* reported to the Sixteenth (Inactive) Fleet, completing tender availability on January 29, 1946, and then went down the St. John's River to Green Cove Springs, Florida, for decommissioning and preservation for any future emergency. The last of her Coast Guard crew left the ship on March 1, 1946. The *Peterson* had spent 10,162 hours underway since her commissioning and traveled 146,875 miles.

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[Click here](#) to access a detailed oral history of a former *Peterson* crewman, Radarman Second Class Collingwood Harris.

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"U.S. Coast Guard manned destroyer PETERSON (DE-152) in wartime camouflage on Atlantic Ocean - Mediterranean escort convoy duty."; no date/photo number; photo by "Krebs #11."

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#### **DANFS History:**

PETERSON (DE-152) was laid down 28 February 1943 by Consolidated Steel Corp., Orange, Tex.; launched 15 May 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Lola B. Peterson; and commissioned 29 September 1943, Lt. Comdr. Richard F. Rea, USCG, in command. PETERSON moved to Galveston, Tex., 6 October 1943 to continue her outfitting, then sailed by way of Algiers, La. to Bermuda for shakedown. She reported to Charleston, S.C., for a brief post-shakedown upkeep 22 November, and six days later was enroute to New York, arriving the last day of the month.

Her first voyage between New York and Casablanca, French Morocco, commenced 2 December when PETERSON sailed for Norfolk to join the main body of a North Africa bound convoy. She returned to New York 18 January 1944. PETERSON then shifted her activity to Northern Europe making ten voyages to British and French ports. On the first of these voyages, PETERSON, with the other escorts of Division 22, steamed from New York 1 March to screen a fast oiler convoy to Londonderry, Northern Ireland. On this voyage a submarine sank destroyer escort LEOPOLD (DE-319). PETERSON arrived with the convoy at Londonderry and returned to New York 28 March where she was joined by destroyer escort GANDY (DE-764).

Departing New York 15 April with an Ireland-bound convoy, PETERSON was detached the following day to escort two merchant ships, which had collided, back to New York. Enroute to rejoin the convoy later on the same day, PETERSON joined GANDY and escort JOYCE (DE-317) in rescuing survivors of the torpedoed PAN PENNSYLVANIA and destroying the attacker. At 1345,

JOYCE reported a hot sound contact and the last survivors scrambled on board PETERSON just as JOYCE dropped a pattern of depth charges. The submarine shot to the surface at 1400. GANDY opened fire on the U-boat which returned fire until rammed with a glancing blow by GANDY two minutes later. PETERSON commenced firing at 1404 to lay open the conning tower, and as she passed alongside the submarine, fired two shallow-set depth charges at close range from her starboard "K" guns. At 1409 the submarine surrendered and the crew commenced abandoning the sinking boat. JOYCE picked up the crew and U-550 slid beneath the waves at 1430. The three escorts rejoined the convoy and steamed safely to Lisahally, Northern Ireland, returning to New York 12 May 1944.

PETERSON made three more convoy voyages to Londonderry and return. She then made successive voyages from New York to Plymouth, England (6 October-5 November 1944); from New York to Cherbourg, France and Plymouth England (23 November-24 December); from New York to Liverpool, England (10 January-9 February 1945); from New York to Le Havre, France and Southampton, England (27 February-29 March); and from Boston to Greenock, Scotland and Liverpool, England, returning to New York 16 April. After an overhaul to fit her for extended duty in the Pacific, PETERSON departed New York 4 June 1945 with the rest of Escort Division 22 for exercises at Culebra Island, and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. She transited the Panama Canal 23 June, called at San Diego for voyage repairs, and arrived Pearl Harbor 16 July. With the end of the war, she reported to Commander, Amphibious Group 8 and Commander, Transport Squadron 18 for duty. PETERSON departed Pearl Harbor the last day of August 1945 with an LST convoy. Calling at Saipan enroute, the convoy arrived off Wakayama, Japan, 27 September and PETERSON assumed patrol in the Inland Sea until 29 October. On that day she set course for the United States, calling at Pearl Harbor, and arriving San Diego 17 November. She shifted to San Pedro the following day. She got underway for the east coast, transiting the Panama Canal 6 December. Three days later off the coast of Florida, a PBM-3D (Mariner) landed close aboard to ask assistance. PETERSON towed the disabled plane to Ponce de Leon Inlet where a crash boat from New Smyrna took over the tow. She then continued up the coast to Charleston, S.C., arriving 10 December 1945. PETERSON sailed for Jacksonville, Fla., 14 January 1946, arriving the following day to commence her inactivation. She was placed out of commission, in reserve, at Green Cove Springs, Fla., 1 May 1946.

She was recommissioned in 1952 and served with the U.S. Navy, with a Navy crew, until being decommissioned and stricken from the Navy List in 1973.

PETERSON received one battle star for World War II service.

PETERSON was stricken from the Navy Register on 1 August 1973, and sold for scrap on 24 June 1974.



From: *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. V, pp. 273-274.

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**Sources:**

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